

THE  
FOLKLORE OF THE MALAYS.

BY  
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“There is nothing that clings longer to a race than the religious faith in which it has been nurtured. Indeed, it is impossible for any mind that is not thoroughly scientific to cast off entirely the religious forms of thought in which it has grown to maturity. Hence, in every people that has received the impression of foreign beliefs, we find that the latter do not expel and supersede the older religion, but are engrafted on it, blend with it, or overlie it. Observances are more easily abandoned than ideas, and even when all the external forms of the alien faith have been put on, and few vestiges of the indigenous one remain, the latter still retains its vitality in the mind, and powerfully colours or corrupts the former. The actual religion of a people is thus of great ethnographic interest, and demands a minute and searching observation. No other facts relating to rude tribes are more difficult of ascertainment or more often elude enquiry.”\* The general principle stated by LOGAN in the passage just quoted receives remarkable illustration from a close investigation of the folklore and superstitious beliefs of the Malays. Two successive religious changes have taken place among them, and when we have succeeded in identifying the vestiges of Brahmanism which underlie the external forms of the faith of Muhammad, long established in all Malay kingdoms, we are only half-way through our task. There yet remain the powerful influences of the still earlier indigenous faith to be noted and accounted for. Just as the Buddhists of Ceylon turn, in times of sickness and danger, not to the consola-

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\* LOGAN—*Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, IV., 573.

tions offered by the creed of Buddha, but to the propitiation of the demons feared and revered by their early progenitors, and just as the Burmese and Talaings, though Buddhists, retain in full force the whole of the *Nat* superstition, so among the Malays, in spite of centuries which have passed since the establishment of an alien worship, the Muhammadan peasant may be found invoking the protection of Hindu gods against the spirits of evil with which his primitive faith has peopled all natural objects.

An exposition of the chief characteristics of demon-worship, as it still lingers among the Malays, is a work requiring some research and labour. Its very existence is scarcely known, and there are not probably many Englishmen who have witnessed the frantic dances of the *Pawang*, or listened to the chant and drum of the *Bidu* beside the bed of some sick or dying person. In the present paper, a corner is lifted of the veil of Muhammadanism, behind the dull uniformity of which, few, even, among those who know Malays well, have cared to look, and an attempt is made to select from the folklore of the peasantry a few popular customs and superstitions, some of which had their origin in the beliefs of the pre-Muhammadan period.

The Malay language itself, abounding as it does in words derived from or imported direct from Sanskrit, offers copious materials for illustrating the progress of Hindu influences in this part of the world. To the evidence thus furnished, the corroborative testimony afforded by the sayings and legends of the people is an important addition.

#### BIRDS.

Ideas of various characters are associated by Malays with birds of different kinds, and many of their favourite similes are furnished by the feathered world. The peacock strutting in the jungle, the argus-pheasant calling on the mountain peak, the hoot of the owl, and the cry of the night-jar, have all suggested comparisons of various kinds, which are embodied in the proverbs of the people.\* The Malay is a keen observer of nature, and his illustrations, drawn from such sources, are generally just and often poetical.

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\* Malay Proverbs--Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Straits Branch), Nos. 4, 72, 73, 93.

The supernatural bird *Gerda* (Garuda, the eagle of Vishnu), who figures frequently in Malay romances, is dimly known to the Malay peasant. If, during the day, the sun is suddenly overcast by clouds and shadow succeeds to brilliancy, the Pêrak Malay will say "*Gerda* is spreading out his wings to dry." \* Tales are told, too, of other fabulous birds—the *jintayu*, which is never seen, though its note is heard, and which announces the approach of rain; † and the *chandrawasi* which has no feet. The *chandrawasi* lives in the air, and is constantly on the wing, never descending to earth or alighting on a tree. Its young even are produced without the necessity of touching the earth. The egg is allowed to drop, and as it nears the earth it bursts and the young bird appears fully developed. The note of the *chandrawasi* may often be heard at night, but never by day, and it is lucky, say the Malays, to halt at a spot where it is heard calling.

There is an allusion to this mythical bird in a common *pantun*—a kind of erotic stanza very popular among the Malays:—

*Chandrawasi burung sakti*  
*Sangat berkurong didalam awan.*  
*Gonda gulana didalam hati,*  
*Sahari tidak memandang tuan.‡*

Nocturnal birds are generally considered ill-omened all over the world, and popular superstition among the Malays fosters a prejudice against one species of owl. If it happens to alight and hoot near a house, the inmates say significantly that there will soon be "tearing of cloth" (*koyah kapur*) for a shroud. This does not apply to the small owl called *punggok*, which, as the moon rises, may often be heard to emit a soft, plaintive note. The note of the *punggok* is admired by the Malays, who suppose it to be sighing for the moon, and find in it an apt simile for a desponding lover.

\* *Gerda meninjur kepah-nia.*

† *Laksana jintayu me-nanti-kan hujan*—As the *jintayu* awaits the rain—is a proverbial simile for a state of anxiety and despondency.

*Jintayu=jatayu* (Sanskrit), a fabulous vulture.

‡ The *chandrawasi*, bird of power,  
 Is closely hidden amid the clouds.  
 Anxiety reigns in my heart,  
 Each day that I see not my love.

The *baberek*, or *birik-birik*, another nocturnal bird, is a harbinger of misfortune. This bird is said to fly in flocks at night; it has a peculiar note, and a passing flock makes a good deal of noise. If these birds are heard passing, the Pêrak peasant brings out a *sengkalan* (a wooden platter on which spices are ground) and beats it with a knife or other domestic utensil, calling out as he does so: "*Nenek bawa hati-nia*" ("Great-grandfather, bring us their hearts"). This is an allusion to the belief that the bird *baberek* flies in the train of the Spectre Huntsman (*hantu pemburu*), who roams Malay forests with several ghostly dogs, and whose appearance is the forerunner of disease or death. "Bring us their hearts" is a mode of asking for some of his game, and it is hoped that the request will delude the *hantu pemburu* into the belief that the applicants are *ra'iyat*, or followers, of his, and that he will, therefore, spare the household.

The *baberek*, which flies with the wild hunt, bears a striking resemblance to the white owl, *Totosel*, the nun who broke her vows and now mingles her "tutu" with the "holoa" of the Wild Huntsman of the Hartz.\*

The legend of the Spectre Huntsman is thus told by the Pêrak Malays:—

In former days, at Katapang, in Sumatra, there lived a man whose wife, during her pregnancy, was seized with a violent longing for the meat of the *pelandok* (mouse-deer). But it was no ordinary *pelandok* that she wanted. She insisted that it should be a doe, big with male offspring, and she bade her husband go and seek in the jungle for what she wanted. The man took his weapons and dogs and started, but his quest was fruitless, for he had misunderstood his wife's injunctions, and what he sought was a *buck pelandok*, big with male offspring, an unheard of prodigy. Day and night he hunted, slaying innumerable mouse-deer, which he threw away on finding that they did not fulfil the conditions required. He had sworn a solemn oath on leaving home that he would not return unsuccessful, so he became a regular denizen of the forest, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the animals which he slew, and pursuing night and day his fruitless search. At length he said to himself: "I have

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\* Dawn of History, p. 171.



“hunted the whole earth over without finding what I want; it is now time to try the firmament.” So he holloa’d on his dogs through the sky, while he walked below on the earth looking up at them, and after a long time, the hunt still being unsuccessful, the back of his head, from constantly gazing upwards, became fixed to his back, and he was no longer able to look down at the earth. One day, a leaf from the tree called *Si Limbak* fell on his throat and took root there and a straight shoot grew upwards in front of his face. In this state he still hunts through Malay forests, urging on his dogs as they hunt through the sky, with his gaze evermore turned upwards.

His wife, whom he had left behind when he started on the fatal chase, was delivered in due time of two children—a boy and a girl. When they were old enough to play with other children, it chanced one day that the boy quarrelled with the child of a neighbour with whom he was playing. The latter reproached him with his father’s fate, of which the child had hitherto been ignorant, saying: “Thou art like thy father, who has become an evil spirit, ranging the forests day and night and eating and drinking no man knows how. Get thou to thy father.” Then the boy ran crying to his mother and related what had been said to him. “Do not cry,” said she, “it is true, alas! that thy father has become a spirit of evil.” On this the boy cried all the more, and begged to be allowed to join his father. His mother yielded at last to his entreaties, and told him the name of his father and the names of the dogs. He might be known, she said, by his habit of gazing fixedly at the sky and by his four weapons—a blow-pipe (*sumpitan*), a spear, a kris, and a sword (*klewang*). “And,” added she, “when thou hearest the hunt approaching, call upon him and the dogs by name and repeat thy own name and mine so that he may know thee.”

The boy entered the forest, and, after he had walked some way, met an old man, who asked him where he was going. “I go to join my father,” said the lad. “If thou findest him,” said the old man, “ask him where he has put my chisel which he borrowed from me.” This the boy promised to do, and continued his journey. After he had gone a long way, he heard sounds like those made by people engaged in hunting. As they approached, he repeated the names which his mother had told him, and

immediately found himself face to face with his father. The hunter demanded of him who he was, and the child repeated all that his mother had told him, not forgetting the message of the old man about the chisel.\* Then the hunter said: "Truly thou art my son. As for the chisel it is true that when I started from house I was in the middle of shaping some bamboos to make steps for the house. I put the chisel inside one of the bamboos. Take it and return it to the owner. Return now and take care of thy mother and sister. As for he who reproached thee, hereafter we will repay him. I will eat his heart and drink his blood, so shall he be rewarded." From that time forward the Spectre Huntsman has afflicted mankind, and many are those whom he has destroyed. Before dismissing his son, he desired him to warn all his kindred never to use bamboo for making steps for a house and never to hang clothes to dry from poles stuck in between the joists supporting the floor, and thus jutting out at right angles with a house,† "lest," said he, "I should strike against such poles as I walk along." "Further," he continued, "when ye hear the note of the bird *birik-birik* at night, ye will know that I am walking near." Then the boy returned to his mother and delivered to her and to all their kindred the injunctions of the lost man. One account says that the woman followed her spectre husband to the forest, where she joins in the chase with him to this day, and that they have there children born in the woods. The first boy and girl retained their human form, according to this account, but some Pawangs say that the whole family are in the forest with the father.

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\* The episode of the chisel, which here seems to be meaningless, connects this legend with the beliefs of the Bataks and of the Balinese regarding earthquakes. If an earthquake occurs, the Batak calls out *Sukul* (the handle of a chisel), in allusion to the chisel of Batara Guru, which was broken during the creation of the world when a raft was being made for the support of the earth. See Kawi Language and Literature, VAN DER TRUK, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, XIII, N. S., Part I., p. 60.

† In explanation of this, it may be necessary to remark that Malay houses are built on wooden posts, so that the floor is raised off the ground to a height varying from three to six feet. A horizontal pole, wedged into the framework of the floor from the outside, would thus stick out at right angles to the house and obstruct a passer-by.

Numerous *mantra*, or charms, against the evil influence of the Wild Huntsman are in use among the Pawangs, or medicine-men, of Pêrak. These are repeated, accompanied by appropriate ceremonies, when the disease from which some sick person is suffering has been traced to an encounter with the *hantu pemburu*.

The following may serve as a specimen :—

*Bi-smi-llâhi-r-rahmâni-r-rahim.*

*Es-salamu 'aleykum Hei Si Jidi laki Mah Jadah.*

*Pergi buru ka-rimba Ranchah Mahang.*

*Katapang nama bukit-nia,*

*Si Langsat nama anjing-nia,*

*Si Kumbang nama anjing-nia,*

*Si Nibong nama anjing-nia,*

*Si Pintas nama anjing-nia,*

*Si Aru-Aru nama anjing-nia,*

*Timiang Balu nama sampitan-nia,*

*Langkapuri nama lembing-nia,*

*Singha-buana nama mata-nia,*

*Pisan raut panjang rlu*

*Akan pемblah pиang berbulu.*

*Ini-lah pisan raut deripada Maharaja Guru.*

*Akan pемblah prut hantu pemburu.*

*Aku tahu asal angka mula menjadi orang Katapang.*

*Pulang-lah angka ka rimba Ranchah Mahang.*

*Jangan angka meniakat-meniakit pada tuboh badan-ku.*

“In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.  
Peace be on thee, O Si Jidi husband of Mah Jadah.

Go thou and hunt in the forest of Ranchah Mahang.

*Katapang* is the name of thy hill,

*Si Langsat* is the name of thy dog,

*Si Kumbang* is the name of thy dog,

*Si Nibong* is the name of thy dog,

*Si Pintas* is the name of thy dog,

*Si Aru-Aru* is the name of thy dog,

*Timiang Balu* is the name of thy blow-pipe,

*Langkapuri* is the name of thy spear,

*Singha-buana* is the name of its blade,  
 The peeling-knife with a long handle  
 Is to split in twain the fibrous betel-nut ;  
 Here is a knife from Maharaja Gurn  
 To cleave the bowels of the Hunter-Spirit.  
 I know the origin from which thou springest,  
 O man of Katapang.  
 Get thee back to the forest of Ranchah Mahang.  
 Afflict not my body with pain or disease.”\*

In charms intended to guard him who repeats them, or who wears them written on paper, against the evil influences of the Spectre Huntsman† the names of the dogs, weapons, &c., constantly vary. The origin of the dreaded demon is always, however, ascribed to Katapang in Sumatra. This superstition strikingly resembles the European legends of the Wild Huntsman, whose shouts the trembling peasants hear above the storm. It is, no doubt, of Aryan origin, and, coming to the Peninsula from Sumatra, seems to corroborate existing evidence tending to shew that it is partly through Sumatra that the Peninsula has received Aryan myths and Indian phraseology. A superstitious prejudice against the use of bamboo in making a step-ladder for a Malay house and against drying clothes outside a house on poles stuck into the framework, exists in full force among the Pêrak Malays. The note of the *birik-birik* at night, telling as it does of the approach of the *hantu pemburu*, is listened to with the utmost dread and misgiving. The Bataks in Sumatra call this bird by the same name—*birik-birik*. It is noticeable that in Batak legends regarding the creation of the world, the origin of mankind is ascribed to *Putri-Orta-Bulan*, the daughter of *Batara-Guru*, who descended to the earth *with a white owl and a dog*.‡

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\* See a similar charm, for protection against this spirit, in use among one of the wild tribes of the peninsula, *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, I., 318. In the charm given in the text the names of the forest, dogs and blow-pipe are Malay, *Lankapuri* is the Sanskrit name for the island of Ceylon, and *Singha-buana* seems to be composed of two Sanskrit words meaning “lion” and “world.”

† Four or five different versions are in my possession.

‡ MARSDEN—*History of Sumatra*, 385. An imperfect version of the story of the *hantu pemburu* is to be found in DE BACKER'S *L'Archipel Indien*.

## HOUSES.

The superstitions about houses are of infinite number and variety. It is unlucky to place the ladder or steps, which form the approach to a Malay house, in such a position that one of the main rafters of the roof is exactly over the centre of them. Quarrels or fighting in the house will certainly be the result. In selecting timber for the uprights of a Malay house care must be taken to reject any log which is indented by the pressure of any parasitic creeper which may have wound round it when it was a living tree. A log so marked, if used in building a house, exercises an unfavourable influence in child-birth, protracting delivery, and endangering the lives of mother and child. Many precautions must be taken to guard against evil influences of a similar kind, when one of the inmates of a house is expecting to become a mother. No one may "divide the house" (*belah rumah*,) that is, go in at the front door and out by the back, or *vice versa*, nor may any guest or stranger be entertained in the house for one night only; he must be detained for a second night to complete an even period. If an eclipse occurs, the woman on whose account these observances are necessary must be taken into the *penangga* (kitchen) and placed beneath the shelf or platform (*para*) on which the domestic utensils are kept. A spoon is put into her hand. If these precautions are not taken, the child, when born, will be deformed.

To trip on the steps, or to knock one's head against the lintel (Malay door-ways are always inconveniently low) on leaving a house, is unlucky, and if the person to whom this happens is starting upon any business, it must be postponed, and he must stay at home, for the accidents mentioned forbode death. It is also unlucky to start on a journey when rain is falling, for the rain signifies *ayer mata* (tears).

It is unlucky for any one to stand with his arms resting on the steps of a ladder going up to a house for the purpose of talking to one of the inmates. The reason is, that if a corpse is carried out of the house, there must be a man below in this position to receive it. To assume this attitude unnecessarily, therefore, is to wish for a death in the family (*menyuroh hap*).

## LANGKAH.

The Malays share with most other Eastern nations the supersti-

tion which demands that great attention should be paid to the selection of lucky days and lucky hours for the commencement of any important undertaking. The failure of an enterprise, or the bad weather which may happen to attend a journey, is often ascribed to insufficient care in selecting a time when all the conditions for the start (*langkah*)\* should be propitious. There are numerous methods of ascertaining lucky and unlucky days and times, but the ceremonies do not end with the fixing of the time. While waiting for the lucky moment to arrive, a Raja or Chief who is about to start on a journey remains alone in the house, while his attendants stand below in readiness. When at length he descends the steps, his path must not be crossed by any one, nor may any one stand in front of the door. If he knocks his head against the lintel, or catches his great toe in any obstacle, the start is given up, and he returns to the house. If he reaches the ground without accident (*kachak halaman*), he meditates upon a prescribed formula which he repeats in his mind. He avoids the centre of the *halaman* (open space or yard in front of a house), which is called by the Malays *tanah kubur* ("the site of tombs"), and directs his course towards the right.

A journey so begun may last an indefinite time without impairing the efficacy of the good fortune ensured by the observance of the proper ceremonies on starting. The whole journey, *e. g.*, a pilgrimage to Mecca, is covered by them, and the good luck ensured thereby ends only when the house is again reached on the return of the traveller. Some Malays, however, prefer to renew the *langkah* every Friday.

One of the methods of ascertaining what particular times will be auspicious, or the reverse, is called *si bongkok* ("the bent one"). The thumb of one hand is closed, and the two joints and three spaces thus formed are made to represent, early morning (*pagi-pagi*), forenoon (*tengah naik*), midday (*tengah hari*), afternoon (*tengah turun*), and evening (*petang-petang*). Different degrees of fortune may be expected according as the periods named fall to the different joints and spaces of the thumb. Another system is called *si tandok* ("the horn"). It is a calculation on paper by means of a design in the shape of a horn, to different parts of which

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\* Sanskrit *langh*, to stride.



different qualifications are attributed. Good or evil fortune may be expected according as the various periods fall to the various portions of the design. Numerous Malay treatises on this, to them all-important, subject exist. One well-known one is called *Sedang Budiman*. The most popular, perhaps, are those which treat of the five ominous times (*katika lima*) and the seven ominous times (*katika tujuh*). The latter are ruled by the *bin-tang tujuh* (the seven planets), which the Malays enumerate as follows: *Shems*, the sun; *Kamr*, the moon; *Marik*, Mars; *Utarid*, Mercury; *Zahrat*, Venus; *Mustari*, Jupiter; *Zahal*, Saturn. Tables are drawn up assigning the influence of one of these to every hour of the week, and the nature of the influence which each planet is supposed to exercise is fully explained.

#### THE RAINBOW.

*Palangi*, the usual Malay word for the rainbow, means "striped." The name varies, however, in different localities. In Pêrak it is called *palangi minum* (from a belief that it is the path by which spirits descend to the earth to drink), while in Penang it is known as *ular danu*\* ("the snake *danu*"). In Pêrak, a rainbow which stretches in an arch across the sky is called *bantal* ("the pillow") for some reason which I have been unable to ascertain. When only a small portion of a rainbow is visible, which seems to touch the earth, it is called *tunggul* ("the flag"), and if this is seen at some particular point of the compass—the West, I think,—it betokens, the Pêrak Malays say, the approaching death of a Raja.

Another popular belief is that the ends of the rainbow rest on the earth, and that if one could dig at the exact spot covered by one end of it, an untold treasure would be found there. Unfortunately, no one can ever arrive at the place.

#### SUNSET.

Sunset is the hour when evil spirits of all kinds have most power. In Pêrak, children are often called indoors at this time to save them from unseen dangers. Sometimes, with the same object, a

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\* *Dhanuk*, in Hindustani, means "a bow" and is a common term in India, among Hindus, for the rainbow; *dhannu* and *dhanush* also signify "a bow," *dhannu* is used for the sign Sagittarius. All these words are of Sanskrit origin.

woman belonging to a house where there are young children will chew up *kuniet t'rus* (an evil-smelling root, supposed to be much disliked by demons of all kinds) and spit it out at seven different points as she walks round the house.

The yellow glow which spreads over the western sky, when it is lighted up with the last rays of the dying sun, is called *mambang kuning* ("the yellow deity"), a term indicative of the superstitious dread associated with this particular period. The fact that a Sanskrit phrase *senja kala* (*samdhya kala*) is employed in Malay to describe the evening twilight, is not without significance in connection with some of these superstitions.

#### AVOIDANCE OF COW-BEEF.

Among the modern Malays, avoidance of the flesh of swine, and of contact with anything connected with the unclean animal is, of course, universal. No tenet of El-Islam is more rigidly enforced than this. It is singular to notice, among a people governed by the ordinances of the Prophet, traces of the observance of another form of abstinence enjoined by a different religion. The universal preference of the flesh of the buffalo to that of the ox, in Malay countries, is evidently a prejudice bequeathed to modern times by a period when cow-beef was as much an abomination to Malays as it is to the Hindus of India at the present day. This is not admitted or suspected by ordinary Malays, who would probably have some reason, based on the relative wholesomeness of buffalo and cow-beef, to allege in defence of their preference of the latter to the former.

#### ANIMALS.

The wild animals which inhabit the forests of the Peninsula have naturally enough an important place in the folklore of the Malays. The tiger is sometimes believed to be a man or demon in the form of a wild beast, and to the numerous aboriginal superstitions which attach to this dreaded animal, Muhammadanism has added the notion which connects the tiger with the Khalif ALI. One of ALI's titles throughout the Moslem world is "the victorious Lion of the Lord," and in Asiatic countries where the lion is unknown, the *tiger* generally takes the place of the king of beasts.

The bear is believed to be the mortal foe of the tiger, which he sometimes defeats in single combat. (*Bruang*, the Malay word for "bear," has a curious resemblance to our word "Bruin.") A story is told of a tame bear which a Malay left in charge of his house and of his sleeping child while he was absent from home. On his return, he missed his child, the house was in disorder as if some struggle had taken place, and the bear was covered with blood. Hastily drawing the conclusion that the bear had killed and devoured the child, the enraged father slew the animal with his spear, but almost immediately afterwards he found the carcase of a tiger, which the faithful bear had defeated and killed, and the child emerged unharmed from the jungle where she had taken refuge. It is unnecessary to point out the similarity of this story to the legend of Beth-Gelert.\* It is evidently a local version of the story of the Ichneumon and the Snake in the Pancha-tantra.

A mischievous tiger is said sometimes to have broken loose from its pen or fold (*pechah kandang*). This is in allusion to an extraordinary belief that, in parts of the Peninsula, there are regular enclosures where tigers possessed by human souls live in association. During the day they roam where they please, but return to the *kandang* at night!

The superstitious dread entertained by Malays for the larger animals, is the result of ideas regarding them, which have been inherited from the primitive tribes of Eastern Asia. Muhammadanism has not been able to stamp out the deep-rooted feelings which prompted the savage to invest the wild beasts which he dreaded with the character of malignant deities. The tiger, elephant, and rhinoceros were not mere brutes to be attacked and destroyed. The immense advantages which their strength and bulk gave them over the feebly armed savage of the most primitive tribes, naturally suggested the possession of supernatural powers; and propitiation, not force, was the system by which it was hoped to repel them. The Malay addresses the tiger as *Datoh* (grand-father), and believes that many tigers are inhabited by human souls. Though he reduces the elephant to subjection, and uses him as a beast of

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\* Similar Gelert stories are current in Sind. BURTON—Sind Re-visited, II., 89, 303.

burden, it is universally believed that the observance of particular ceremonies, and the repetition of prescribed formulas, are necessary before wild elephants can be entrapped and tamed. Some of these spells and charms (*mantra*) are supposed to have extraordinary potency, and I have in my possession a curious collection of them, regarding which, it was told me seriously by a Malay, that in consequence of their being read aloud in his house three times, all the hens stopped laying! The spells in this collection are nearly all in the Siamese language, and there is reason to believe that the modern Malays owe most of their ideas on the subject of taming and driving elephants to the Siamese. Those, however, who had no idea of making use of the elephant, but who feared him as an enemy, were doubtless the first to devise the idea of influencing him by invocations. This idea is inherited, both by Malays and Siamese, from common ancestry.

In the case of the crocodile, again, we find an instance of a dangerous animal being regarded by Malays as possessed of mysterious powers, which distinguish him from most of the brute creation, and class him with the tiger and elephant. Just as in some parts of India sacred crocodiles are protected and fed in tanks set apart for them by Hindus, so in Malay rivers here and there, particular crocodiles are considered *kramat* (sacred), and are safe from molestation. On a river in the interior of Malacca, I have had my gun-barrels knocked up when taking aim at a crocodile, the Malay who did it immediately falling on his knees in the bottom of the boat and entreating forgiveness on the ground that the individual reptile aimed at was *kramat*, and that the speaker's family would not be safe if it were injured. The source of ideas like this lies far deeper in the Malay mind than his Muhammadanism, but the new creed has, in many instances, appropriated and accounted for them. The connection of the tiger with ALI, the uncle of the prophet, has already been explained. A grosser Muhammadan fable has been invented regarding the crocodile.

This reptile, say the Pêrak Malays, was first created in the following manner:—

There was once upon a time a woman called *Putri Padang Gerinsing*, whose petitions found great favour and acceptance with the Almighty. She it was who had the care of SITI FATIMA, the

daughter of the prophet. One day she took some clay and fashioned it into the likeness of what is now the crocodile. The material on which she moulded the clay was a sheet of *upih* (the sheath of the betel-nut palm). This became the covering of the crocodile's under-surface. When she attempted to make the mass breathe it broke in pieces. This happened twice. Now it chanced that the Tuan PUTRI had just been eating sugar-cane, so she arranged a number of sugar-cane joints to serve as a backbone, and the peelings of the rind she utilised as ribs. On its head she placed a sharp stone and she made eyes out of bits of saffron (*kuniet*); the tail was made of the mid-rib and leaves of a betel-nut frond. She prayed to God Almighty that the creature might have life, and it at once commenced to breathe and move. For a long time it was a plaything of the prophet's daughter, SITI FATIMA, but it at length became treacherous and faithless to Tuan PUTRI PADANG GERINSING, who had grown old and feeble. Then FATIMA cursed it saying: "Thou shalt be the crocodile of the sea, no enjoyment shall be thine, and thou shalt not know lust or desire." She then deprived it of its teeth and tongue, and drove nails into its jaws to close them. It is these nails which serve the crocodile as teeth to this day.

Malay Pawangs in Pêrak observe the following methods of proceeding when it is desired to hook a crocodile. To commence with, a white fowl must be slain in the orthodox way by cutting its throat, and some of its blood must be rubbed on the line (usually formed of rattan) to which the fowl itself is attached as bait. The dying struggles of the fowl in the water are closely watched and conclusions are drawn from them as to the probable behaviour of the crocodile when hooked. If the fowl goes to a considerable distance, the crocodile will most likely endeavour to make off, but it will be otherwise if the fowl moves a little way only up and down, or across the stream. When the line is set, the following spell must be repeated: "*Aur Dangsari kamala sari, sambut kirim Tuan Putri Padang Gerinsing tidak di sambut mata angkan chabut.*" ("O Dangsari, lotus, flower, receive what is sent thee by the Lady Princess Padang Gerinsing; if thou receivest it not, may thy eyes be torn out"). As the bait is thrown into the water the operator must blow on it three times, stroke it three times, and thrice



repeat the following sentence, with his teeth closed and without drawing breath: "*Kun kata Allah sapaya kun kata Muhammad tab paku.*" ("Kun saith God, so kun saith Muhammad; nail be fixed"). Other formulas are used during other stages of the proceedings.

The deer (*rusa*) is sometimes believed to be the metamorphosed body of a man who has died of an abscess in the leg (*chabuk*), because it has marks on the legs which are supposed to resemble those caused by the disease mentioned. Of course, there are not wanting men ready to declare that the body of a man who has died of *chabuk* has been seen to rise from the grave and to go away into the forest in the shape of a deer.

It is lucky to keep cats. The essentially selfish nature of this animal is recognised by the Malays, who say that it always longs for the prosperity of its master, a consummation likely to give it a larger and softer cushion to lie upon! The dog, on the other hand, is unlucky. He longs for the death of his master, an event which will involve the slaying of animals at the funeral feast, when the bones will fall to the dogs. When a dog is heard howling at night he is supposed to be thinking of the broken bones (*niat handak mengutib tulang patah*).

Many Malays refuse to eat the fresh-water fish called *ikan belidah* on the plea that it was originally a cat. They declare that it squalls like a cat when harpooned, and that its bones are very white and fine like a cat's hairs. Similarly, the *ikan tumuli* is believed to be a human being who has been drowned in the river, and the *ikan kalul* to be a monkey transformed. Some specially-favoured observers have seen monkeys half through the process of metamorphosis—half-monkey and half-fish!

#### MISCELLANEOUS.

To be long in getting up after a meal, is said to be a bad omen. It means that the person, if unmarried, will meet with a bad reception from his or her parents-in-law hereafter. The Malay saying in the vernacular is "*Lambat bangket deri tempat makan, lambat di-tegur mentuwak.*"

Clothes which have been nibbled by rats or mice must not be worn again. They are sure to bring misfortune, and are generally given away in charity.



If rain falls on a wedding day, Malays in some districts say that either the bride or bridegroom must have been eating out of the stewpan (*makan dalam kuali*). When a Malay dinner is served, the younger members of the family sometimes amuse themselves by throwing rice into the pan from which the curry has just been taken, stirring it round in the gravy that remains, and then eating it. This is not permitted when one of them is to be married on the following day, as it would be sure to bring rainy weather.

It is unlucky for a child to lie on his face (*menyehrap*) and kick his feet together in the air (*menyabong kaki*). It betokens that either his father or mother will die. A child seen doing this is instantly rebuked and stopped.

When a star is seen in apparent proximity to the moon, old people say there will be a wedding shortly. The wide-spread superstition about the man in the moon is found among the Malays. They discover in the moon an old man sitting under a *beringin* tree (the banyan, *figus indica*).

The entrance into a house of an animal which does not generally seek to share the abode of man, is regarded by the Malays as ominous of misfortune. If a wild bird flies into a house, it must be carefully caught and smeared with oil, and must then be released in the open air, a formula being recited in which it is bidden to fly away with all the ill-luck and misfortunes (*sial jambalang*) of the occupier. An iguana, a tortoise, and a snake are perhaps the most dreaded of these unnatural visitors. They are sprinkled with ashes, if possible, to counteract their evil influence.

A swarm of bees settling near a house is an unlucky omen and prognosticates misfortune.

The evil eye is dreaded by Malays. Not only are particular persons supposed to be possessed of a quality which causes ill-luck to accompany their glance (the *mal'occhio* of the Italians), but the influence of the evil eye is often supposed to affect children,\* who are taken notice of by people kindly disposed towards them. For instance, it is unlucky to remark on the fatness and healthiness of

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\* See LANE'S *Modern Egyptians*, I, 77; also the same author's translation of the *Thousand and One Nights*, Chapter IV., notes 24 and 44, where, in evidence of the antiquity of this superstition, he quotes a well-known line of Virgil:—

“Nescio quis teneros oculis mihi fascinat agnos.”

a baby, and a Malay will employ some purely nonsensical word, or convey his meaning in a roundabout form, rather than incur possible misfortune by using the actual word "fat." "*Ai bukan-nia poh-poh gentai budak ini*" ("Isn't this child nice and round?") is the sort of phrase which is permissible.

If a woman dies in child-birth, either before delivery, or after the birth of a child and before the forty days of uncleanness have expired, she is popularly supposed to become a *langsuyar*, a flying demon of the nature of the "white lady" or "*banshee*." To prevent this, the following precautions are sometimes taken in Pêrak : a quantity of glass beads are put in the mouth of the corpse, a hen's egg is put under each arm-pit and needles are placed in the palms of the hands. It is believed that if this is done the dead woman cannot become a *langsuyar*, as she cannot open her mouth to shriek (*ngilai*), or wave her arms as wings, or open and shut her hands to assist her flight.

*Bujang* ("single," "solitary," and hence in a secondary sense "un-married") is the Sanskrit word *bhujangga* "a dragon". "*Bujang Malaka*," a mountain in Pêrak, is said by the Malays of that State to have been so called because it stands *alone*, and could be seen from the sea by traders who plied in old days between the the Pêrak river and the once-flourishing port of Malacca. But it is just as likely to have been named from some forgotten legend in which a dragon played a part. Dragons and mountains are generally connected in Malay ideas. The caves in the limestone hill, Gunong Pondok, in Pêrak, are said to be haunted by a *genius loci* in the form of a snake who is popularly called *Si Bujang*. This seems to prove beyond doubt the identity of *bujang* with *bhujangga*. The snake-spirit of Gunong Pondok is sometimes as small as a viper and sometimes as large as a python, but he may always be identified by his spotted neck, which resembles that of the wood-pigeon (*tekukur*). Landslips on the mountains, which are tolerably frequent during very heavy rains, and which, being produced by the same cause, are often simultaneous with the flooding of rivers and the destruction of property, are attributed by the natives to the sudden breaking forth of dragons (*naga*) which have been performing religious penance (*ber-tapa*) \* in the mountains, and which are making their way to the sea.

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\* Sanskrit *tapasya*.

The foregoing are only a few specimens of the legends, sayings, superstitions, and peculiarities of the Malays, which may be collected by any one who is resident among them and conversant with their language. Though, in many instances, they are puerile and foolish, they are not without value for the sake of comparison with the superstitious beliefs of other races.

There would be more observers of curious customs and beliefs among the Malays if Englishmen in these latitudes would get out of the habit of regarding the Malays simply as a Muhammadan people inhabiting the countries in the vicinity of the Straits of Malacca. Let them regard the Muhammadanism of the Malay as an accident not to be taken into account in studying the character and tracing the origin of the people. The Asiatic Malay is physically the same, from Sumatra eastward to Borneo, and many legends, customs, and superstitions which are found among the heathen Bataks of Sumatra, the wild tribes of the Peninsula, and the Dayaks of Borneo, belong equally to the more civilised Malay tribes, those who have accepted Muhammadanism, and who, on that account, are popularly and erroneously supposed to be a different race.

